

POL401/532 – Survey Research Methods

Instructor: [Mert Moral](#)

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Office Hours: By [appointment](#) only – via [Zoom](#).¹ M 8:30-11:00am

Lectures: Lecture videos – on YouTube.

Discussions: Online meetings – via [Zoom](#). M 11:40am-1:30pm.

Teaching Assistant: [Yasemin Tosun](#).² By appointment only – via Skype ([yasemintosun91](#)).
W 9:30-11:00am

Course Description

Surveys have long provided researchers with representative, reliable, and valid information, and served as an indispensable tool for our understanding of especially public opinion and electoral behavior. The main objective of this course is to introduce advanced undergraduate and graduate students to a set of universally recognized principles that have been guiding scientific survey studies in the last decades.

Over the course of the semester, we will focus on all major stages of survey research –i.e., research question formulation, sampling, mode of data collection, questionnaire design, pilot testing, interviewing, as well as cleaning, managing, and weighting survey data, and simple hypothesis testing employing survey data. This course pays particular attention to practice as well. We will examine and evaluate several national and cross-national survey studies, and applied social science research. Moreover, students will design their own survey instruments, and acquire the necessary software skills commensurate with their level to be able to examine, edit, and weight survey data, and employ survey data for hypothesis testing.

Upon completion of this course, students will be equipped with the fundamental skills to design, carry out, and evaluate survey studies, and have a thorough understanding of the scientific methods used to collect survey data, and advantages, limitations, and all major stages of survey research.

No prior experience or course work in survey methodology is required for this course. However, many course topics are technical and may require further explanation. Moreover, survey research includes elements of both art and science. While traditional lectures and assigned materials will cover the scientific nature of survey research, the art part requires getting your hands dirty. Hence, both undergraduate and graduate students will be asked to design their own survey instruments. Other course requirements consist of a take-home midterm and a final examination, four short assignments, participation in in-class and online discussions, and attendance for undergraduate students; a take-home midterm exam, four short assignments, attendance and participation in in-class and online discussions, and a final research paper for graduate students.

¹Hyperlinks are indicated with the blue color. Please click on the hyperlink to set up an appointment via Calendly.

²Yasemin Hoca is a Ph.D. candidate with great software, methodological, and teaching skills. Please try to benefit from her experience and skills as much as possible, especially when you have a question about the course content or requirements, and experience a software problem.

Course Outline and Important Dates

Week 1	22.02	Why Survey Research?	Groves et al. Ch.1★
Week 2	01.03	Total Survey Error Approach	Groves et al. Ch.2★
Week 3	08.03	Target Population and Sampling Frame	Groves et al. Chs.3 and 4.1-4.3★
Week 4 ³	15.03	Sampling	Groves et al. Ch.4.4-4.10★
Week 5	22.03	Modes of Data Collection	Groves et al. Ch.5
Week 6	29.03	Questionnaire Design	Groves et al. Ch.7★
Week 7	05.04	Midterm Exam	★ <i>See the 'Additional Readings'</i>
Week 8	12.04	Evaluation, Reliability, and Validity	Groves et al. Ch.8★
Week 9	19.04	Interviewing	Groves et al. Ch.9★
Week 10	26.04	Ethics and Experiments	Groves et al. Ch.11★
Week 11	03.05	Processing Survey Data	Groves et al. Chs.6 and 10
Week 13	17.05	Operations and Descriptive Statistics	★ <i>See the 'Additional Readings'</i>
Week 14	24.05	Hypothesis Testing and Wrap-up	Groves et al. Ch.12★
	31.05	Final Exam/Final Research Paper	

Textbooks

– You should have a hard/soft copy of the following textbook we will use in POL401/532:

- Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. 2009. *Survey Methodology*. Second Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

– The textbook is available in the University bookstore (Homer) and reserved in the Information Center (IC), which can be checked out for only 24 hours to ensure that all students have a chance to read the assigned chapters in a timely manner.

– Additional (required) readings for the weeks indicated with ★ in the previous section are listed below and also uploaded to the “Resources” section of the [course page](#).

Additional Readings⁴

★ Week 1 (13.02) - Why Survey Research?

– Brady, Henry E. 2000. “Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33 (1):47-57.

– Smith, Tom W. 2013. “Survey-Research Paradigms Old and New.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 25 (2):218-29.

★ Week 2 (10.02) - Total Survey Error Approach

– Groves, Robert M., and Lars Lyberg. 2010. “Total Survey Error: Past, Present, and Future.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74 (5):849-79.

– Jennings, Will, and Christopher Wlezien. 2018. “Election Polling Errors across Time and Space.” *Nature Human Behaviour* 2 (April 2018):276-83.

³Please ensure that you have access to Stata/MS Excel during our online meetings on the dates indicated with the yellow color.

⁴The journal articles below that are indicated with the plus sign are assigned/required only for graduate students.

- Silver, Nate. 2020. "The Polls Weren't Great. But That's Pretty Normal." <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polls-werent-great-but-thats-pretty-normal/>. [Online]

★ **Week 3 (17.02) - Target Populations and Sampling Frames**

- Moral, Mert. 2019. A Comparative Study of the Individual and Contextual Determinants of Invalid Votes in Europe. In *SAGE Research Methods Cases*. <https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781526478733>.
- OECD Development Communication Network. 2017. "Understanding Public Attitudes to Sustainable Development: Overview of International Surveys." https://www.oecd.org/dev/pgd/Overview_of_International_Surveys_on_Sustainable_Development_DevCom_%20Nov2017.pdf. [Online]
- Universitas Osloensis Institutt for Statsvitenskap (ISV). 2018. "Comparative Survey Data on Values, Attitudes and Opinions." https://www.sv.uio.no/isv/tjenester/kunnskap/datasett/survey_data.html#values. [Online]
- + Heath, Anthony, Stephen Fisher, and Shawna Smith. 2005. "The Globalization of Public Opinion Research." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 8: 297-333.

★ **Week 4 (24.02) - Sampling**

- Creative Research Systems. 2012. "Sample Size Calculator." <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>. [Online]
- FiveThirtyEight. 2020. "FiveThirtyEight's Pollster Ratings: Based on the Historical Accuracy and Methodology of Each Firm's Polls." <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/pollster-ratings/>.
- Moral, Mert. *Forthcoming*. "Politics as (Un)Usual? An Overview of the June 2018 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Turkey." In *Elections and Public Opinion in Turkey: Through the Prism of the 2018 Elections*, ed. A. Çarkoğlu and E. Kalaycıoğlu. [Available on SU Course+]
- + Aydaş, İrem. 2020. *Pre-Election Polls in Turkey, Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, Sabancı University, Unpublished MA Thesis. pp.6-51 [Available on SU Course+].
- + Chang, Linchiat, and Jon A. Krosnick. 2009. "National Surveys via RDD Telephone Interviewing Versus the Internet: Comparing Sample Representativeness and Response Quality." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (4):641-78.
- + Yeager, David S., Jon A. Krosnick, Linchiat Chang, Harold S. Javitz, Matthew S. Levendusky, Alberto Simpser, and Rui Wang. 2011. "Comparing the Accuracy of RDD Telephone Surveys and Internet Surveys Conducted with Probability and Non-Probability Samples." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75 (4):709-47.

★ **Week 5 (02.03) - Modes of Data Collection**

- + Couper, Mick P. 2013. "Is the Sky Falling? New Technology, Changing Media, and the Future of Surveys." *Survey Research Methods* 7 (3):145-56.
- + Galesic, Mirta, and Michael Bosnjak. 2009. "Effects of Questionnaire Length on Participation and Indicators of Response Quality in a Web Survey." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73

(2):349-60.

+ Kreuter, Frauke, Stanley Presser, and Roger Tourangeau. 2008. "Social Desirability Bias in CATI, IVR, and Web Surveys: The Effects of Mode and Question Sensitivity." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72 (5):847-65.

+ Prior, Markus. 2013. "Visual Political Knowledge: A Different Road to Competence?" *Journal of Politics* 76 (1):41-57.

★ **Week 6 (09.03) - Questionnaire Design**

– Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. 2016. "Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5: Design Report (Sample Design and Data Collection Report)." https://ces.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ces5_DesignReport.pdf. [Online]

– Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. 2016. "Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5 (2016-2021) Questionnaire." https://ces.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ces5_Questionnaire.txt. [Online]

+ Blumberg, Stephen J. 2007. "Coverage Bias in Traditional Telephone Surveys of Low-income and Young Adults." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71 (5):734-49.

+ Fricker, Scott, Mirta Galesic, Roger Tourangeau, and Ting Yan. 2005. "An Experimental Comparison of Web and Telephone Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (3):370-92.

+ Groves, Robert M. 2006. "Nonresponse Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Household Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (5):646-75.

+ Medway, Rebecca L., and Jenna Fulton. 2012. "When More Gets You Less: A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Concurrent Web Options on Mail Survey Response Rates." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (4):733-46.

★ **Week 7 (23.03) - Question Wording**

– Luskin, Robert C., and John G. Bullock. 2011. "'Don't Know' Means 'Don't Know': DK Responses and the Public's Level of Political Knowledge." *Journal of Politics* 73 (2):547-57.

– Schuldt, Jonathon P., Sara H. Konrath, and Norbert Schwarz. 2011. "'Global Warming' or 'Climate Change'? Whether the Planet is Warming Depends on Question Wording." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75 (1):115-24.

★ **Week 8 (06.04) - Evaluation, Reliability, and Validity**

– Carmines, Edward G., and Richard A. Zaller. 1979. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

– Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. "Statistical Conclusion Validity and Internal Validity." In *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*, ed. W. R. Shadish, T. D. Cook and D. T. Campbell. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

★ **Week 9 (13.04) - Interviewing**

- Davis, Darren W. 1997. “The Direction of Race of Interviewer Effects among African-Americans: Donning the Black Mask.” *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1):309-322.
- Tourangeau, Roger, and Tom W. Smith. 1996. “Asking Sensitive Questions: The Impact of Data Collection Mode, Question Format, and Question Context.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60 (2):275-304.

★ **Week 10 (20.04) - Ethics and Experiments**

- Aytaç, S. Erdem, and Ali Çarkoğlu. 2018. “Presidents Shaping Public Opinion in Parliamentary Democracies: A Survey Experiment in Turkey.” *Political Behavior* 40 (2):371-93.
- Barabas, Jason, and Jennifer Jerit. 2010. “Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?” *American Political Science Review* 104 (2):226-42.
- + Berinsky, Adam J., Gregory A. Huber, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. “Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk.” *Political Analysis* 20 (3):351-68.
- + Lyall, Jason, Graeme Blair, and Kosuke Imai. 2013. “Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan.” *American Political Science Review* 107 (4):679-705.

★ **Week 13 (04.05) - Operations and Descriptive Statistics**

- Çarkoğlu, Ali, Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, S. Erdem Aytaç, and Mert Moral. 2018. “Turkish Election Study 2018 Post-control Questionnaire.”
- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. 3rd Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.143-187 [Available on SU Course+].

★ **Week 14 (11.05) - Hypothesis Testing**

- Sapsford, Roger. 2011. “Keeping It Simple: Tabular Analysis.” In *Survey Research*, ed. R. Sapsford. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Grading

- Grades will be given on a 100-points scale. Cumulative final grades will then be converted to letter grades at the end of the semester as follows: 85-100=A, 80-84=A-, 75-79=B+, 74-70=B, 65-69=B-, 60-64=C+, 55-59=C, 50-54=C-, 45-49=D+, 40-44=D, 0-39=F.
- For undergraduate students, class requirements in turn constitute 30% (final exam), 25% (midterm exam), 35% (short assignments), 10% (participation and attendance) of final grades.
- For graduate students, class requirements in turn constitute 30% (final research paper), 25% (midterm exam), 35% (short assignments), 10% (participation and attendance) of final grades.

Course Requirements

• Midterm and Final Examinations

- You will take a two hours-long midterm examination on April 5, 2021. The midterm aims to assess your knowledge about some key concepts and design features you will have learned in the first half of the semester, and consists of three short questions requiring a thorough understanding of all lecture slides and assigned readings (including those assigned for Week 7), and a short essay where you will evaluate a publicly available poll/survey from the perspective of the total survey error approach.
- The three hours-long final exam will consist of four short-essay questions and include all topics we will have covered throughout the semester.
- Your webcam and microphone should be on during the midterm and final examinations. You must also attend the real-time online exams using your SU email account. In the case of non-compliance with this and other declared exam procedures, your exam will be void. Please make sure to check that your webcam and microphone function properly before the exams.

• Short Assignments

- Over the course of the semester, you will submit five short assignments that will together constitute 35% of your final grade.
 - The first short assignment will ask you to examine the design of a scientific survey conducted in Turkey and evaluate it from the perspective of the total survey error approach.
 - The second assignment will ask you to examine several publicly available polls for the March 31, 2019, Ankara municipality election, compute the margins of error and mean absolute errors, and discuss possible sources of discrepancies, if any.
 - The third assignment will ask you to search for a scientific national or cross-national survey study of which the questionnaire is publicly available, and report the survey items that it contains and that are used in scholarly literature to measure a construct of your choice (e.g., income, ethnicity, economic evaluations, policy preferences). You will then propose alternative survey items and discuss how such alternative question types, wordings and/or response options would allow you to better measure the construct.
 - The fourth assignment asks you to posit/state a simple/bivariate hypothesis where the dependent variable approximates the construct you identified in the second assignment, then employ the 2018 Turkish Election Study (TES) data to conduct a simple hypothesis (chi-square or t) test.
 - The fifth assignment asks you to posit/state a simple/bivariate hypothesis and test it by employing the 2019 Istanbul Municipality Election Study data.
- ★ Assignment-specific instructions will be provided during the lectures (depending on our progress) and the assignments will be due the following lecture.

• Final Research Paper – *only for graduate students*

- You may choose to research any topic/research question on public opinion or electoral be-

havior.⁵ Your research, however, should clearly identify a research question that has not been sufficiently addressed or answered in previous literature, and you should posit a hypothesis that takes a “cause and effect” form.

- Depending on your level of methodological expertise, you will design a survey study and/or survey items suitable for the task at hand, or write a full paper employing survey data from a national or a cross-national survey study.
- Your paper should be organized as follows:
 - Introduction – approximately 2 pages, where you briefly state your research question and explain why it should be studied (i.e., the relevance of your study), how and in what regards your research contributes to the main debate(s) in literature, and your main *point* (theoretical argument).
 - Literature review – approx. 3 pages, where you discuss the state of previous research, and rival and/or conflicting explanations for your phenomenon of interest, and explain how and in what regards your study differs from previous literature (i.e., the novelty of your study).
 - Theoretical expectations – approx. 2 pages, where you clearly explain your *theoretical expectations* informed by previous literature, explain the direction of the causal relationship between your outcome of interest and main explanatory variable/s, and deduct a testable *hypothesis/hypotheses*.
 - Research design – approx. 3 pages, where you provide *conceptual and operational definitions* of your dependent and main explanatory/independent variable(s), explain the temporal and spatial scope of your proposed project, preferred survey research design, most suitable survey items, and describe how you (would) look into the problem –e.g., model specification, estimator, measurement and decision rules, ruling out rival explanations, important assumptions you make, and potential econometric problems and their solutions.
 - Empirical findings – approx. 3-4 pages, presentation, interpretation, and graphical illustration of your findings in statistical and substantive terms.
 - Conclusion – approx. 2 pages, a short summary of what you have done and why you have done that, along with a short discussion of the significance of your (potential) findings in terms of the related literature, strengths and limitations of your study, how your and others’ further research can improve our understanding of the topic.

Software

- You will use either Stata (any version after Stata 12 would be sufficient for estimation and prediction purposes, but I strongly suggest using Stata 15 or 16 for graphics) or MS Excel, depending on your level and will, for the short assignments (and final paper).
- Before Week 4, you should have a relatively recent version of the software of your preference installed on your personal computer.
- Installation instructions for [Stata 16 SE](#) and [Microsoft Office 365](#) are available on the IT Department’s websites. You may also ask Yasemin Hoca for an appointment to get help with remote

⁵Please note that we must have a Zoom meeting before March 22, 2021, to discuss your proposed topic.

installation.

Classroom Policy, Attendance, and Participation

- Some of the assigned textbook chapters, and other required and supplemental meetings are technical and may thus require further explanation and clarification. We will thus follow an asynchronous/traditional lecture format for the online lectures that will be posted to YouTube each week. You are, however, strongly advised and will be encouraged to ask any and all questions you might have either as comments to the YouTube videos or during our online meetings.
- In the synchronous part of each week, we will discuss the real-world implications of many survey design features and their practical applications in the scholarly literature employing survey data (i.e., theoretical mechanism and expectations, research design, and empirical evidence in the assigned readings), and learn how to use Stata and/or MS Excel to organize, describe, and analyze survey data. We will hold those online meetings over Zoom.
- Not watching the lecture videos or missing the online meeting will have detrimental consequences later on. Nonetheless, stuff happens –especially during these turbulent times. Should scheduling conflicts arise, please inform me before they happen and note that, except for very rare, serious, and documentable instances, you should attend all online meetings. You can miss 1 (one) class/meeting without any grade penalty. Each other missed class/meeting will result in a 5% deduction in your final grade.
- Note that your participation and attendance are graded together. Attending the online discussion without necessary preparation (i.e., having watched the lecture videos, read the assigned readings, and finished the short assignment, if any,) and not taking part in the in-class discussions will result in a bad participation grade.

Syllabus

- This syllabus includes important information and administrative requirements about when, how, and what you should do to pass this course with a good grade. Please read it carefully and read it again before you email your teaching assistant or instructor.
- The PDF version of the syllabus on SU Course+ is the official syllabus for this course as it is updated periodically.⁶ Please visit the [course page](#) to view its most recent version.

Course Page and e-mails

- After each online meeting I will post the lecture slides and short problem sets, if any, to the [course page](#) and the recorded Zoom videos to the shared Google Drive folder on the course page.⁷
- Via SU Course+, I will also send you weekly announcements including the link/s to the lecture video/s uploaded to YouTube that you must watch before the online meetings.
- I will use your Sabanci University email to communicate administrative and other course-related issues with you. Please check your email regularly and, if necessary, reply in a timely manner.

⁶Course content, requirements, and policies are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

⁷The contents published on Google Drive and YouTube are created to be used and distributed within Sabanci University. The intellectual property rights of the content belong to the instructor and Sabanci University without any limitation. It cannot be used, copied, or reproduced to third parties without the prior written permission of the instructor.

– The fastest way to contact me is always via email. Please feel free to email me any time and about any **relevant** academic or non-academic issue.

Formatting, Writing, Late Submission, and Grade Appeal

– A list of course requirements and a tentative schedule are provided above. The exact schedule is, however, contingent on our progress and subject to change upon prior notice.

– There are no margin or font requirements for written assignments. You should, however, turn in stapled, well-organized, and professional-looking papers (i.e., with your name, page numbers, proper citations, a properly formatted bibliography, and professional-looking tables and/or graphs).

– Note that I pay particular attention to your writing and correct use of survey methodology terminology. Yasemin Hoca or I will provide you with annotated copies of your written assignments to improve your writing in both form and content. You are expected to take our comments into account in your remaining assignments.

– Please proofread your assignments for spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors.

– Late submissions for all short assignments will be penalized by 1 (one) point for each hour they are late. You will receive 0 (zero) if your short assignments are late for more than 4 (four) days, and if your final research paper is late by more than 1 (one) hour.

– Except serious circumstances documented by the University Health Center and/or approved by the faculty administration, and for students with disabilities, there will be no make-up assignments or extensions.

– If you are unsatisfied with the grade you received, you may write a formal memorandum explaining your concerns and requesting that your grade be reviewed. I will respond to your inquiry in writing and will not discuss your grade with you in person.

Academic Honesty

– As its [Research Misconduct Policy](#) suggests, Sabancı University expects students to do their own work and acknowledge others when presenting their work.

– It is your responsibility to do your own work and properly cite your sources using an appropriate format. Please refer to [APSA's Style Manual](#) for the preferred citation format for this class, especially if you are unsure about what to or how to cite.

– Minor penalties for citation and bibliographical errors will accumulate in the case of a consistent pattern, and any case of plagiarism and/or other sorts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

– Note that all written assignments for this course will be considered written take-home exams according to the YÖK regulations, and, therefore, plagiarism in take-home exams will be considered cheating and pursued to the limits of University and YÖK rules.

Disability Accommodation

– Extra time for assignments and other necessary arrangements for students with disabilities will be made in conjunction with the [Center of Individual and Academic Development](#) and the instructor.